STATE INTEROPERABILITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
A subcommittee of the Information Services Board

SIEC Members

Chief Lowell Porter-Chair
Washington State Patrol

Chief James Broman-Vice Chair
Washington State Fire Chiefs Association

John Conrad
Washington State Department of Transportation

Mike Doherty
Washington State Association of Counties

Tom Griffith
Washington State Emergency Management Association

Sheriff Ken Irwin
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

Mark Kahley
Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Alan Komenski
Association of Washington Cities

General Timothy Lowenberg
Washington State Military Department

Michael McVicker
Washington State Department of Information Services

Jim Mullen
Washington State Emergency Management Division

Chief of Police David Stern
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

Vacant
Washington State Fire Marshal

DIS Staff to SIEC
Dennis Hausman
E-mail: DennisH@dis.wa.gov
Voice: 360-902-3463
Cellular: 360-951-7169

State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC)
Focusing on Emergency Communications System Interoperability

Background

The tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, served as a catalyst for public safety agencies across the nation to examine how they communicate with each other in times of disaster. Public safety agencies find that such coordination is essential for disaster preparedness, emergency management and public safety. Coordination results in more cost-effective use of state resources and improves government services to those who work, play and live within Washington state.

To address emergency communications system interoperability in Washington state, Gov. Gary Locke signed House Bill 1271 into law on April 16, 2003, which created the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). This legislation was codified into RCW 43.105.330. The SIEC is responsible for managing how Washington state public safety agencies use wireless communications to carry out their daily operations and coordinate responses during major events.

Challenge

Public safety officers, firefighters and emergency medical service providers are severely hampered in their ability to effectively respond in a coordinated manner to crimes, disasters, fires and medical emergencies because their communications systems are often incompatible.

An article in the April 2000 edition of the *National Institute of Justice Journal* stated: "Public safety agencies report that incompatible radio frequency [equipment] … and limited funding to update equipment are their biggest problems."

Facts:

- One in three public safety agencies have experienced operational difficulties due to lack of wireless interoperability.

- Jurisdictions have invested in different, incompatible wireless technologies.

- Public safety communication is spread over ten bands of spectrum.

- Washington's diverse geography presents logistical problems.

This results in:

- increased risk to life and property due to unavailability of safety/medical personnel (unable to receive coordinated emergency instructions; staff occupied with duplicative training); and

- increased costs (emergency vehicles requiring multiple radios, additional training, no leverage for aggregated purchasing discounts) due to the lack of a coordinated approach.

Call to action

The actions currently taking place:

- Seek partnerships between state and local agencies

- Develop a wireless communications plan for Washington state

- Identify funding resources

- Establish emergency technology standards

- Make coordinated investments in statewide systems

Approach

Interoperability is an essential communication link with public safety and public service communications systems, which permits units from two or more different entities to interact with one another. It also allows the exchange of information according to a prescribed method to achieve predictable results.

The SIEC was created and codified in July 2003 in part to:

- Develop policies for technical standards for state wireless radio communications systems

- Coordinate and manage the licensing and use of state-designed and state-licensed radio frequencies

- Serve as point of contact for the state and Federal Communications Commission on matters relating to allocations, use and licensing of radio spectrum

- Seek support, including possible federal funding or other funding, for state-sponsored wireless communications systems

- Develop recommendations for legislation that may be required to promote interoperability of state wireless communications systems

- Foster cooperation and coordination among public safety and emergency response organizations

- Work with wireless communications groups and associations to ensure interoperability among all public safety emergency response wireless communications systems